

The Theology of the High Holy Days *U'N'taneh Tokeif* - The Central Prayer of Rosh HaShana & Yom Kippur

Introductory Question:

- 1) What are some images or characterizations you would use to describe our relations with God on the High Holy Days?

Let us now relate the power of this day's holiness, for it is awesome and frightening. On it Your sovereignty will be exalted; Your throne will be firm with kindness and You will sit upon it in truth. It is true that You are the One Who judges, proves, knows, and bears witness; Who writes and seats, counts and calculates; Who remembers all that was forgotten. You will open the Book of Chronicles - it will read itself, and everyone's signature is in it.

The great shofar will be sounded and a still, thin sound will be heard. Angels will hasten, a trembling and terror will seize them - and they will say, 'Behold, it is the Day of Judgment, to muster the heavenly host for judgment!' - for they cannot be vindicated in Your eyes in judgment. All mankind will pass before You like members of a flock. Like a shepherd pasturing his flock, making sheep pass under his staff, so shall You cause to pass, count, calculate, and consider the soul of all the living; and You shall apportion the fixed needs of all Your creatures and inscribe their verdict.

On Rosh HaShana will they be inscribed and on Yom Kippur will they be sealed: how many will pass from the earth and how many will be created; who will live and who will die; who will die at an old age and who not an old age; who by water and who by fire, who by sword, who by beast, who by famine, who by thirst, who by storm, who by plague, who by strangulation, and who by stoning. Who will rest and who will wander, who will live in harmony and who will be harried, who will enjoy tranquillity and who will suffer, who will be impoverished and who will be enriched, who will be degraded and who will be exalted.

But **repentance, prayer and charitable giving** remove the evil of the decree!

וְנִתְּנָה תִקְוָה קִדְשֵׁת הַיּוֹם, כִּי הוּא נוֹרָא וְאִיּוֹם: וּבּוֹ תִנְשֵׂא מַלְכוּתְךָ, וַיִּבּוֹן בְּחֶסֶד כְּסֶאֱד, וְתִשָּׁב עָלָיו פְּאֻמָּת. אֱמֶת כִּי אַתָּה הוּא דִין וּמוֹכִיחַ, וַיִּוָּדַע וְעַד, וְכוֹתֵב וְחוֹתֵם, וְסוֹפֵר וּמוֹנֵה, וְתוֹזְבוֹר כָּל הַנִּשְׁכָּחוֹת: וְתִפְתַּח אֶת סֵפֶר הַזְכוּרוֹת, וּמֵאֵלָיו יִקְרָא, וְחוֹתֵם יָד כָּל אָדָם בּוֹ.

וּבְשׁוֹפֵר גָּדוֹל יִתְקַע, וְקוֹל דִּמְמָה דִּקְה יִשְׁמַע: וּמִלְאָכִים יִחְפְּזוּן, וְחֵיל וּרְעָדָה יֵאֱחָזוּן, וַיֹּאמְרוּ: "הִנֵּה יוֹם הַדִּין לִפְקוֹד עַל צָבָא מְרוֹם בְּדִין!" כִּי לֹא יִבּוֹ בְּעֵינֶיךָ בְּדִין, וְכָל בָּאֵי עוֹלָם יַעֲבִירוּן לִפְנֶיךָ כְּבָנֵי מְרוֹן. כְּבִקְרַת רוּעָה עֲדָרוּ, מִעֲבִיר צֹאנֹו תַחַת שְׂבָמוֹ, כֵּן תַּעֲבִיר וְתִסְפּוֹר וְתִמְנֶה, וְתִפְקֹד נֶפֶשׁ כָּל חַי, וְתַחֲתוֹד קֶצֶבָה לְכָל בְּרִיָּה, וְתִכְתּוֹב אֶת גְּזֵר דִּינָם.

בְּרֹאשׁ הַשָּׁנָה יִפְתְּבוּן, וּבַיּוֹם צוֹם כְּפוֹר יִחְתְּמוּן, כְּמָה יַעֲבִירוּן, וְכְמָה יִבְרָאוּן: מִי יַחֲיֶה, וּמִי יָמוּת: מִי בְּקֶצֶז, וּמִי לֹא בְּקֶצֶז: מִי בְּאֵשׁ, וּמִי בַּמַּיִם: מִי בַּחֲרֹב, וּמִי בַּחֲיָה: מִי בְּרָעַב, וּמִי בַּצָּמָא: מִי בְּרָעַשׁ, וּמִי בַּמִּגָּפָה: מִי בַּחֲנִיקָה, וּמִי בַּסְּקִילָה: מִי יָנוּחַ, וּמִי יָנוּעַ: מִי יִשְׁקַט, וּמִי יִמְרָף: מִי יִשְׁלֹו, וּמִי יִתְיַסֵּר: מִי יַעֲנִי, וּמִי יַעֲשֶׂר: מִי יִשְׁפֹּל, וּמִי יָרוּם.

וְתִשׁוּבָה וְתַפִּלָּה וְצַדִּיקָה
מַעֲבִירִין אֶת רָע הַגְּזֵרָה.

- 2) Are there any similarities between your answer to the intro question and what you found in the **וַיְתַנֶּה הַקָּלָה** text? If so, what are they? If not, what are the differences? Use specific examples from the text.

- 3) No matter what you answered in #1, what are your reactions to the scene described in the **וַיְתַנֶּה הַקָּלָה** prayer? Do you like or dislike it? What about the characterizations of God, do you agree or disagree with them? Do they fit into your belief system or not? Explain your answer.

The Protection of Life & Health in Jewish Law Above All in Jewish Law

The Source for the *mitzvah* of פְּקוּחַ נֶפֶשׁ

1) What is the most important commandment, the one that supercedes all others?

If a wall collapsed upon a person and it is unclear if a person really is there or not there, unclear if the person is alive or dead, unclear if the person is Jewish or non-Jewish - you clear away the stones. If one is found dead, you leave the body there (until after the festival is over).

ז מי שֶׁנִּפְלָה עָלָיו מִפֶּלֶת, סֵפֶק הוּא שָׁם
סֵפֶק אִינוּ שָׁם, סֵפֶק חַי סֵפֶק מֵת, סֵפֶק
נִכְרִי סֵפֶק יִשְׂרָאֵל, מִפְּקָחִין עָלָיו אֶת
הַגָּל. מִצְוָהּ חַי, מִפְּקָחִין עָלָיו. וְאַם מֵת,
יִנְיחוּהוּ:

1) Is a person normally allowed to move stones on Yom Kippur? Y / N

2) If the Rabbis are permitting a person to move stones in this type of case, what message are they sending to us about the value of a life?

3) Find the word/s in the mishna from which the Rabbis derive the term used for the *mitzvah* of saving a life.

4) Should there be any exceptions to this rule? Even if you think there should not be, what do you think some exceptions might be if there were exceptions written into the law?

5) This quotation is from another Tractate of the Mishna. How is it related to פְּקוּחַ נֶפֶשׁ?

The human being was created singular to teach you that anyone who destroys a life of one from Israel, Scripture says of him that it is as if he destroyed an entire world and anyone who saves one life from Israel, Scripture says of him that it is as if he saved an entire world.

מִשְׁנָה מִנֵּהדְרִין: פֶּרֶק ד', מִשְׁנָה ח'
...נִבְרָא אָדָם יְחִידִי, לְלַמֶּדְךָ, שְׂכַל הַמַּאֲבֵד נֶפֶשׁ
אַחַת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, מַעֲלָה עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב בָּאֵלּוּ אֶבֶר
עוֹלָם מָלֵא. וְכָל הַמְּקִים נֶפֶשׁ אַחַת מִיִּשְׂרָאֵל, מַעֲלָה
עָלָיו הַכְּתוּב בָּאֵלּוּ קַיָּם עוֹלָם מָלֵא...